



## Preparing for a Hurricane Information You Need to Know

The Atlantic hurricane season officially extends from June 1 through November 30. By May of each year, your hotel's updated Hurricane Preparedness Plan should be finalized and operational. Providing for the safety, comfort, and peace of mind of hotel guests is an important part of a Hurricane Preparedness Plan. It is important to remember that most visitors to Miami-Dade County do not understand the significant safety risks that hurricanes pose and they do not know what preparedness measures to take. During a hurricane emergency each hotel is responsible for providing its guests with information to make informed decisions when a mandatory evacuation is ordered. It is also the responsibility of the hotel to provide its guests with transportation and alternate accommodations during a hurricane evacuation.

The American Red Cross, in cooperation with Miami-Dade County Office of Emergency Management, will open hurricane evacuation centers (HECs) throughout Miami-Dade County to shelter evacuated residents. HECs are havens of last resort and only promise refuge from the storm; they will be crowded, uncomfortable, and only provide mere essentials such as restroom facilities. Hotel guests should only report to a HEC as the last-resort, unavoidable measure when all other arrangements have failed. For a variety of reasons, a HEC is not where a hotel guest should be.

### **Important Resources:**

Hotel Hurricane Hotline	(305) 468-5900
Miami-Dade Call Center	(305) 468-5900
Greater Miami Convention & Visitor's Bureau	(305) 539-3000 <a href="http://www.gmcvb.com">www.gmcvb.com</a>
Miami-Dade Office of Emergency Management (OEM) Community Preparedness	(305) 468-5423 <a href="http://www.miamidade.gov/oem">www.miamidade.gov/oem</a>

### ***What components should be included in my hotel's Hurricane Preparedness Plan?***

- What preparedness measures should my hotel take prior to hurricane season?
- In the event of an evacuation, when should we move our guests to our partner hotel?
- How will we transport our evacuated guests to the partner hotel?
- What area of the partner hotel will our guests occupy?
- What services, if any, will the partner hotel provide our guests?
- What supplies, if any, will the partner hotel provide our guests?
- When and how can our guests return to our hotel?

### ***What preparedness measures should my hotel take prior to hurricane season?***

Identify a hotel(s), located outside of the evacuation zones, with which you already have a relationship or can develop one. Work collaboratively with this local "partner" hotel(s) to develop a plan for the transfer of your guests in the case of an evacuation. Agree to a reserved block of rooms and a room rate. If the partner hotel reaches its capacity, identify interior spaces of the partner hotel where additional evacuees can seek refuge, such as conference rooms. In this case, consider appropriate accommodations for guests with special needs. Offer to send your staff to the partner hotel to assist with your guests. Offer to transfer food, water, utensils, bedding supplies, etc. to the partner hotel. These measures will make your guests understand that your hotel takes their safety and their comfort seriously.

Remember that even though residents of southern Florida are often quite familiar with the risks posed by hurricanes and the preparedness measures that counter these risks, out-of-town guests

are likely to be unaware. It is the responsibility of all hotels located within an evacuation zone of Miami-Dade County to inform their guests about the dangers posed by a hurricane and what they can expect to occur if a hurricane is likely to strike our area during their stay. To facilitate this communication, the Miami-Dade County Office of Emergency Management has prepared a one-page brochure with the relevant information for visitors to Miami-Dade County, attached as the last page of this document. Feel free to make copies and make this information available to your guests throughout hurricane season.

It is also very important that hotel management ensure the safety of its staff. Offering them preparedness information prior to hurricane season and offering them time to prepare their personal property prior to the arrival of a storm will not only safeguard your staff's welfare, but also enable them to report back to work in a more timely manner. The Miami-Dade County Office of Emergency Management has many resources available to increase preparedness, such as speakers, publications, and trainings. Please see [www.miamidade.gov/oem](http://www.miamidade.gov/oem) or contact the Community Preparedness Coordinator at 305-468-5423 for more information.

***In the event of an evacuation, when should we move our guests to our partner hotel?***

Under threat of an approaching hurricane, the Miami-Dade County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), operated under the auspices of the County Manager's Office of Emergency Management (OEM), will evaluate the storm threat and determine if an evacuation of risk areas is necessary. This is a complex, serious decision-making process that involves many factors and participants. For a variety of reasons, such as extended traffic clearance times, an evacuation order will likely occur prior to the National Hurricane Center's announcement of a hurricane watch or warning. An evacuation order is for the best interest of the safety and well being of the public. If an evacuation is ordered, it will be announced through the media by the Miami-Dade County Mayor or other authorized County official. If you are uncertain whether or not your facility must evacuate, contact Miami-Dade Call Center at 305-468-5900 or refer to the OEM's website at [www.miamidade.gov/oem](http://www.miamidade.gov/oem). During an emergency, click on the Ready, Set, Safety program for guidelines about all safety measures that should be taken and when.

A **voluntary evacuation** order may be announced, usually several hours prior to a mandatory evacuation order being issued, as a convenience to those who have special needs or circumstances. A voluntary evacuation order is a warning to persons within a designated area that a threat to life and property may be imminent. While individuals are not required to evacuate, it would be advantageous for them to do so, particularly those who require additional time to leave or take preparatory actions, such as tourists, people who are elderly, and those with special needs.

As the threat increases from an approaching storm, a **mandatory evacuation**<sup>1</sup> may be ordered. Persons residing within the designated evacuation zone are required to relocate and seek refuge in an inland, non-evacuation area; this is to protect them from storm surge and rain-induced flooding. Those residing within the designated evacuation zone must leave as quickly as practical upon learning of the evacuation order. Evacuees are strongly encouraged to seek refuge within Miami-Dade County, as traffic will likely prevent timely out-of-county evacuation. Some of your guests may have friends or family in the area. Staying with such acquaintances during an evacuation order is always a good alternative; perhaps your hotel will consider assigning staff to assist guests who have this option. Staff may also help facilitate alterations in travel plans that some guests may wish to make.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Mandatory evacuation" means that you must leave for your own safety. In view of the many pre-storm preparatory activities going on, public safety officials will not have the time or resources to "force" people to leave. However, should an individual choose not to evacuate, they must understand that they are on their own and that access to public safety services such as police and fire-rescue will likely be unavailable for an extended period. Additionally, officials will not put their lives in jeopardy to respond to, or rescue, persons stranded within an evacuated area during or immediately after an event.

Evacuations are issued for the protection and safety of everyone within the evacuation area. ***If a hotel located in an evacuation zone chooses not to evacuate when a mandatory evacuation order has been issued, that hotel is responsible, and may be liable, for the safety and well being of its guests and employees. Public safety services such as police, emergency medical service, and fire-rescue, are likely to be unavailable – you are on your own!***

***How will we transport our evacuated guests to the partner hotel?***

Hotel management should arrange private transportation to transport guests to the partner hotel. Remember that guests with special needs may require additional time or specialized transportation. The Greater Miami Convention and Visitor's Bureau is one source of contact information for transportation companies. Please see [www.gmcvb.com](http://www.gmcvb.com).

***What area of the partner hotel will our guests occupy?***

This decision should be agreed upon with the partner hotel prior to hurricane season. Be sure to inform your guests where they will be going and what to expect, that is, whether they will be given regular rooms or simply a space in a banquet hall. Communication and information flow is key to maintaining a positive, calm atmosphere in an emergency situation.

***What services and supplies, if any, will the partner hotel provide our guests?***

These decisions should also be agreed upon with the partner hotel prior to hurricane season. Your hotel should consider providing bed and bathroom linens if guests will need to stay in public areas without private bed and bath facilities. Regardless of what services and supplies your partner hotel has agreed to provide, it is always a good idea to encourage that your guests prepare an emergency supply kit with the following items for 3-5 days, packed in easy-to-carry containers such as backpacks or suitcases:

- Water, one gallon per person per day
- Non-perishable food, a manual can opener, and eating utensils
- Battery powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries
- First aid kit, prescriptions, and glasses or contact lenses
- Important documents in water-proof cases
- Cash
- Personal hygiene products
- Extra clothes and shoes
- Baby items
- Pet supplies, if traveling with pets

***When and how can our guests return to our hotel?***

Continue to monitor local media or the Miami-Dade County Office of Emergency Management's website at [www.miamidade.gov/oem](http://www.miamidade.gov/oem) for information about the lifting of an evacuation order, conditions of roads, availability of services, and post-storm safety tips. If your guests will be returning to your hotel, please facilitate their transportation.

***Are there any other resources that will provide me with information about emergencies?***

During non-emergency periods, all tourists and hoteliers can call the Greater Miami Convention & Visitor's Bureau (305) 539-3000.